

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

Please accept this testimony expressing my support for H.B. 5283, which will ensure schools are funded based on students' learning needs, and that ALL students receive the full education funding they are entitled to.

I am proud to live in Connecticut, which is considered among the top 5 states in the country for K-12 education. However, these last two years have made it even more clear than before that the education opportunities available to students depend on where they live. In Connecticut, not every student has access to the excellent education our state is known for.

It is very obvious that there are serious, structural economic and racial disparities between different districts across the state. Over the past two years, Connecticut educators, parents, and, most importantly, students, have had to navigate unprecedented situations in and out of the classroom, and for districts that do not have adequate resources to educate their students, these situations have been even more difficult.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been thankful to live in Guilford, a town where the school district has done everything they could to support student learning throughout the public health emergency. When our schools were closed in the spring of 2020, our district provided technological devices and school meals to any families that requested them, as well as pivoting quickly to remote learning. In the fall of 2020, our district began the year with students attending school in-person two days a week, but by the end of October, K-6 students were attending school 4 days a week. My children benefited tremendously from being back in school, and in-person schools allowed us to better juggle full-time work with family responsibilities when our children were learning from home. Friends in other suburban school districts had similar experiences, while friends in urban school districts had much less access to in-person schooling. These families struggled throughout the year to supervise remote learning, often while working full-time. Children rely on schools for social connections and stability, as well as learning opportunities. Working families rely on schools to provide environments where children are learning and cared for while parents are at work. While our family continued to have access to all these benefits throughout the 2020-21 school year, families in less affluent districts had to cope without them.

This year, Connecticut districts have access to federal relief funds, which allow districts to give children additional resources to address challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I'm concerned about what will happen when federal funding runs out. Communities need more resources to meet the needs of their students and they cannot wait for ECS dollars to be phased in over the next six years.

The State of Connecticut needs to provide our schools with the funding they need to ensure student success in school and beyond. ALL children should have access to counseling services, school buildings with adequate ventilation, teachers that receive the support they need to remain in their classrooms, and districts that receive adequate school funding.

Thank you for your service and your attention to this important matter.

Joanna Meyer
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